"You Lie! You Are Trying to Frighten Me!"

kindliness. He knew that William Stone was devoid of deep feeling, even for his daughter.

III

IN his own room, at last, Latham went over to the window and stared out into the velvet night.

There had been a brief but veiled talk with Fanny Caldwell, and then an unavoidable rubber of bridge, organized triumphantly by Miss Torrence, but now he had the loneliness he had desired—the freedom to relax, to drop the mask of pretended interest.

Without Marjorie, life seemed empty. Yet the ironic mentor he called his reason reminded him that men as good as he had suffered in the same way and had recovered. Their lives had not been ruined. They had even loved again, after a time, and had married; had been happy. Meanwhile, his work remained to him; and he would give himself to it the more fully. Work—love; together, they constituted life. His work itself was based upon a love of truth as deep, as compelling almost, as the softer passions.

In the midst of these moments of emotional readjustment it suddenly occurred to him that he was considering only himself. What of Marjorie? Would Kent make her happy? Had the man appealed to her heart, or merely to her imagination?

"I have the right to ask?" he muttered.

The time dragged on, and Latham still wrestled for inner peace. He had no morbid liking for his misery, but he knew it was useless to try to sleep till he got himself better in hand. And he could not decide that the situation was right. He could not believe that Marjorie truly loved Kent. She was fascinated by his charm and by the mystery of his experience.

He heard the big hall clock chime one. Then, suddenly, there came a knock at his door. The sound was so unexpected, and he had been so completely lost in his thoughts, that, though he turned involuntarily, he did not speak. The door was slowly opened from without, and a man entered.

It was Kent. He had on a long gray dressing-gown. He walked as if he were very tired.

"Your light was burning, doctor," he said with an effort. "I had to see you—professionally."

"Are you ill?" asked Latham. "Sit down."

"Thanks," replied Kent dully. He staggered to the couch at the foot of the bed. "I'm pretty weak."

He let himself sink down on the couch before Latham got to him. He was breathing rapidly.

"I must have fainted," he gasped. "I went to the bath-room, and was turning on the light. Then I found myself lying on the floor. I felt as if I had been pounded."

"Too much smoking, perhaps?" suggested Latham.

"I haven't smoked since morning." Kent smiled wanly. "To tell the truth, doctor, I've had a strange, dizzy feeling all day. Some of the time it has seemed as if a draft of cold air were blowing on me."

"What?" exclaimed Latham.

The abruptness of the words caused fear to leap into Kent's eyes. He partly raised himself on his elbow, and his lips parted.

But Latham had turned away. His brows were knit, and it was several minutes before he again faced Kent and said quietly:

"I will look you over."

He made a careful, methodical examination—pulse, heart, respiration, knee-jerk, and so on. Kent was sound and hard—hard as nails. With the few minutes of rest, his breathing had returned to normal. So Latham, who never hurried to conclusions, was forced at last to the hypothesis which he hoped would prove unnecessary. And with an effort of will, he thrust from his mind all considerations and emotions except professional interest. He was in the grip of his work.

"Have you ever—fainted before?" he asked.

"Once, a year or more ago."

"What were the circumstances?"

"I was crossing the Arabian desert with a caravan. One day I felt just as we were making midday camp."

"How long were you unconscious?"

"I don't know. My Arabs wouldn't talk of it. I fancy they thought I was in some holy trance—like a dervish. Myself, I thought it was the heat."

"And did you have any preliminary dizziness?"

"Yes."

"And a sensation of a draft of cold air?"

Kent nodded. His eyes were fixed on Latham's face as if to catch the reflected significance of his own words.

"And tonight," said Latham. "Do you know how long you lay on the floor?"

"It must have been for some time. I can't say how long."

"And when you came to yourself, did the furniture seem to have been disturbed?"

"What do you mean? Yes, I must have knocked the chair over in falling."

"Where were you standing when you lost consciousness?"

"By the light—close to the door."

"And in what part of the bath-room were you when you came to?"

Kent stared apprehensively.

"At the farther side," he said. "I seem to have staggered several steps before I went down."

"Are you conscious of having staggered?" Latham persisted.

"No. But what is all this, anyway?"

"A few more questions first," said Latham impersonally. "Now, please be very careful how you answer. Have you, from time to time during your life, had moments of mental blankness—as if you could not account for a second or so—perhaps when you were talking with some one?"

"Why, yes"—Kent spoke hesitantly—"during the last few years."

"And has any one ever remarked your turning suddenly pale?"

"Yes. But it didn't seem to amount to anything. Is it—is it my heart?"

Latham shook his head.

"You have felt a little dizzy afterward?"

"Why, yes."

"And perhaps your neck muscles have been somewhat stiff?"

"They have ached sometimes. Now, don't keep it back, Dr. Latham. What is it?"

Kent raised himself higher on the couch. His bearing had become steadier, but there was still the tortured fear in his eyes. And Latham, who knew that the hardest truth was often more merciful than uncertainty, answered him.

"It is bad," he said. "Not many great and useful men have had it. Cæsar suffered from it; so did Napoleon; so did Peter the Great."

Kent's face was set in staring horror.

"School yourself," continued Latham. "Yes, it is epilepsy."

Kent relaxed as if a stunning blow had been struck him. His lower lip dropped. But, with a rebound to sudden fury, he jumped to his feet.

"You lie!" he exclaimed. "You are trying to frighten me! You—"

His voice died away as he saw the truth in Latham's face. He sank limply to the couch and covered his face with his hands.

"It might be worse," said Latham gently. "Consider the situation as calmly as you can; and listen to me. You are in splendid physical shape. You have taken good care of your body, and you may withstand many nervous inroads. The attacks may never be frequent. Look constantly to your general health. Avoid undue excitement. Do not marry."

"Ha!"

Kent sprang from the couch. At the action, Latham realized the force of what he had said.

"Be not marry!"

He was no longer the single-minded scientist, but the man. His position was reversed before the operation. He pleaded.

"I am sorry," he said quietly. "For the moment I had forgotten the special bearing of my words. Nevertheless—you must not marry."

Kent looked at him contemptuously; then arose on his feet and went slowly to the window. After the lapse of many seconds he turned back to Latham, and his eyes were steady.

"Why?" he asked coldly.

"There is this shadow upon your life."

"Well? I shall keep it hidden from her."

"And—and the question of children?"

"There needn't be children," said Kent calmly. "No, Dr. Latham, I'm not going to give up happiness, because once in a year or two there is danger of being unconscious for a few minutes."

"But, man, think of her!" exclaimed Latham, with growing disgust. "She is sure to find it out. And—"

"That is something you needn't concern yourself with," said Kent. "I'm quite capable of looking out for her."

"But you don't realize—"

"That you're in love with her yourself?" Kent launched a short laugh. "No; that's been plain enough ever since you came. It's even plainer now."

Latham made an abrupt gesture. He smothered his resentment.

"You distrust me," he said gravely. "I have spoken to you as a physician, and not as a man. Now I ask you to go to New York and see Bidwell, and follow his advice. If he tells you not to marry, you certainly will not accuse him of interested motives."

Kent was silent.

"Will you do it?" Latham persisted.

"No, by Heaven, I won't!" Kent exploded. "You think you've got me in a trap. But if all the quacks in the world told me to give Marjorie up, I would not. Do you understand? She's mine; she'll stay mine."

"No!" exclaimed Latham sharply.

"I'm not afraid of you," sneered Kent. "I have come to you professionally. I am protected by the medical secret. It is as sacred to you as the confessional is to the priest. Your mouth will stay shut. Suppose I went to Bidwell, and he also told me not to marry, do you think he would interfere if I didn't follow his advice? Certainly not."

"But, Kent—" Latham cried.

"We'll stop right here," said Kent. "I came to you for professional advice. You've given it."

He jerked his head in a curt bow, and left the room.

IV

BY all the vows that bound him to his professional ideals, Latham was pledged to silence. However, in the moments that followed Kent's departure, he let himself look at the case humanly, emotionally; and his soul cried out in utter revolt.

Should he work out a scheme by which Mr. Stone would of himself discover what was wrong with Kent? Should he bring about a disclosure that would appear to be accidental?

Impatiently he dismissed the thought. He would not evade the issue.

"As sacred as the confessional!"

His own words. He remembered how strongly he had insisted that in every case the physician must keep the patient's confidence. Without that assurance, how would it be possible to establish the rapport essential in diagnosis?

"As sacred as the confessional!"

The physician of men's bodies must be as single-purposed as the physicians of men's souls.

But Marjorie—bound to a man who had no right to marry! How could he permit it?

"The good of the greater number," he muttered.

Was it sound reason? If the patient were afraid or ashamed to tell the truth, should not the physician's failure to treat the case successfully be charged against the patient? To insure full knowledge, should the physician condone a moral wrong and say, "This is beyond my province"?

He could not answer. All the traditions to which he had been tutored struggled against his human impulse, and accused him of warping his views to fit his emotions. And so, racked by his problem, he paced the room until the red dawn streaked the sky.

"The good of the greater number."

But was the good of the greater number always the greater good? Marjorie!

It came to him in a flash at last. Whatever the result to Latham, whatever the ethics to which he had been bound, Marjorie should not suffer. Even if he had to give up his profession, Marjorie should not suffer.

His portfolio lay on the table. Within it were the typewritten sheets of his lecture on the medical secret. He took the manuscript and tore it in two.

V

"THIS is most distressing, Phil," said Mr. Stone. "Are you sure there can be no mistake?"

"I am sure," [illegible] Latham.

"And he had an attack last night? How terrible! Poor Marjorie!"

Latham was silent. Mr. Stone considered before speaking again.

"You say he came to you professionally?" he suggested.

"Yes." Latham spoke shortly.

"Well, it put you in an awkward place, Phil. But it was important for me to know. The match seemed suitable, but—Marjorie will get over it." His face brightened. "Who knows, Phil? Perhaps, after a time, she and you—"

"Stop!" said Latham painfully. "I go back to town at once. There is a train in half an hour. I am more than half minded to give up practice and go abroad for a year or two."

Mr. Stone smiled.

"Foolish!" he said. "This is awkward, Phil, but it is not so tragic as you think. From my standpoint, you have acted sensibly—yes, sensible. In time Marjorie will feel the same way."

"Don't!" Latham pleaded. "Good-by, Mr. Stone."

"And Marjorie?"

But Latham was gone. Mr. Stone smiled a quiet, worldly smile.

Latham had already made his excuses to Fanny Caldwell, and the motor would soon be at the door; but a duty remained. Kent had not yet come downstairs; and Latham went up to his room and knocked.

At the dull invitation to enter, he opened the door. Kent, still in his gray dressing-gown, was sitting before the empty fireplace. His brow was furrowed; his eyes were somber.

"Well?" he queried, not rising.

"I have told Mr. Stone," said Latham.

Kent slowly nodded.

"I thought you would," he said. "In the hours I have been sitting h— I have come to see that you would. It is a violation you were bound to make. He stared into the fireplace. "I've been growing older, these hours," he added.

Latham stepped toward him impulsively. Kent raised his head and nodded toward the window.

"I've been trying not to look out there," he said.

Latham looked. In the garden, Marjorie, all in white, was helping the gardener to cull the morning flowers.

(Continued on page twenty-one.)

"I Know You Will Be Happy For Me. I Am Going to Marry Cyril Kent."